

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01
INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02
SS-15 USIA-06 IO-13 AID-05 IGA-02 EB-08 TRSE-00
OMB-01 SSC-01 MCT-01 ACDA-07 AGRE-00 COME-00 /107 W
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R 191421Z AUG 77

FM AMEMBASSY ANTANANARIVO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9596

INFO AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM

AMEMBASSY MAPUTO

AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY PORT LOUIS

AMEMBASSY VICTORIA

AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE

AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

CINCPAC

CINCUSNAVEUR LONDON

COMIDEASTFOR

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 ANTANANARIVO 1504

E.O. 11652:GDS

TAGS: PDIP, PFOR, CN, US

SUBJECT: ESTABLISHMENT OF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH
COMORIAN REPUBLIC (CR)

REF: ANTANANARIVO 1501 (NOTAL)

1. SUMMARY. COMORIAN AUTHORITIES WELCOMED ESTABLISHMENT OF
RELATIONS WITH US ON AUGUST 15 AND DID THEIR BEST TO GIVE EVENT
MAXIMUM PUBLICITY. THEY REQUESTED USG ASSISTANCE IN CONVINCING
FRENCH GOVERNMENT OF DESIRABILITY OF LEAVING MAYOTTE AND IN
"BRINGING ABOUT A MORE REASONABLE ATTITUDE TOWARD CR ON PART
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OF DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF MADAGASCAR" (DRM). THEY SPECIFICALLY
ASKED FOR US SUPPORT IN THE ATTEMPT THEY INTEND TO MAKE DURING
THE FORTHCOMING UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY TO OBTAIN INTERNATIONAL
FINANCIAL AID TO COMPENSATE FOR EXPENSES GENERATED BY REPATRI-
ATION OF COMORIANS FROM MADAGASCAR. CR INTENDS TO REMAIN
NON-ALIGNED AND HAS ALLEGEDLY REFUSED A LARGE AMOUNT OF
SOVIET AID OFFERED IN EXCHANGE FOR SOVIET USE OF

HAHAYA AIRFIELD ON GRANDE COMORE AND A DEEPWATER ANCHORAGE OF ANJOUAN ISLAND. GOVERNMENT IS HARD-PRESSED FINANCIALLY AND STILL IN HIGHLY DISORGANIZED STATE WITH LOCUS OF POWER SOMEWHAT HARD TO DISTINGUISH. END SUMMARY.

2. DURING MY VISIT TO GRANDE COMORE, AUGUST 13-18, TO ESTABLISH RELATIONS COMORIAN AUTHORITIES PARADED ME PROMINENTLY THROUGHOUT THE ISLAND IN OFFICIAL AUTOMOBILE FLYING AMERICAN FLAG, PRECEDED BY SINGLE UNIFORMED MOTOR-CYCLE ESCORT CONSTANTLY BLOWING HIS SIREN AND WARNING OTHER VEHICLES TO SIDE OF ROAD. TAPES OF STATEMENTS I MADE ON ARRIVAL AND AT PRESENTATION OF LETTER OF ACCREDITATION, AS WELL AS FOREIGN MINISTER'S REPLY, WERE BROADCAST OVER RADIO COMORES AND COMMUNIQUE ON ESTABLISHMENT OF RELATIONS SENT TO REUTERS, MADAGASCAR. SOME CONCERN WAS SHOWN AT SMALL NOTICE OF EVENT GIVEN BY VOA.

3. PRESIDENT ALI SOILIH HAD LITTLE OF SUBSTANCE TO SAY ON THE TWO OCCASIONS I SAW HIM. HE WAS OBVIOUSLY GRATEFUL FOR PRESIDENT CARTER'S LETTER EXTENDING RECOGNITION WHICH I DELIVERED TO HIM ON AUGUST 16 AND SAID ESTABLISHMENT OF RELATIONS WAS AN IMPORTANT EVENT FOR CR IN VIEW OF AMERICA'S IMPORTANCE IN THE WORLD. HE PRAISED PAST US EFFORTS ON BEHALF OF THE THIRD WORLD AND PARTICULARLY THE NEW FOCUS BROUGHT TO THESE EFFORTS BY ADMINISTRATION OF PRESIDENT CARTER. AT A COCKTAIL PARTY IN MY HONOR ON CONFIDENTIAL

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AUGUST 17 HE TALKED MOSTLY ABOUT PLANS WHICH HE, AN AGRONOMIST, HAS FOR DEVELOPING AGRICULTURE IN THE ISLANDS. EVER SMILING AND PREASANT, HE DOES NOT REVEAL MUCH OF HIMSELF. EVEN HIS CLOSEST AIDES ARE QUITE SUBDUED IN HIS COMPANY.

4. THE FOREIGN MINISTER, MUZAWOIR ABDALLAH, IS ANOTHER STORY. ALTHOUGH POLITE, HE IS DIRECT AND OUTSPOKEN. ON THREE OCCASIONS, MY INITIAL CALL, MY PRESENTATION OF ACCREDITATION, AND A DINNER HE GAVE FOR ME, HE TOOK IT UPON HIMSELF TO URGE US TO ACT ON CR'S BEHALF IN ITS DIFFERENCES WITH FRANCE AND MADAGASCAR. ON THE ISSUE OF MAYOTTE HE EVEN INCLUDED THIS APPEAL IN HIS PREPARED SPEECH ACCEPTING MY ACCREDITATION, STATING THAT WHILE ALL INITIATIVES TO BRING PEACE TO INDIAN OCEAN ARE WELCOME, CONTINUED ILLEGAL OCCUPATION OF COMORIAN TERRITORY BY A BIG POWER CAN ONLY CREATE A CLIMATE OF WAR. "THAT IS WHY WE FEEL THAT YOUR GOOD OFFICES, IN CONVINCING THE FRENCH THAT IT IS IN THEIR INTEREST AS WELL AS OURS TO LEAVE THE COMORIAN ISLAND OF MAYOTTE, WILL BE APPRECIATED BY ALL."

5. FOREIGN MINISTER ALSO ORALLY REQUESTED ME TO USE MY DUAL ACCREDITATION TO BRING ABOUT A MORE REASONABLE ATTITUDE ON THE PART OF THE DRM TOWARD THE COMOROS. IT IS OBVIOUS THAT FEELING RUNS DEEP ON THIS SUBJECT IN THE WAKE OF THE MASSACRE OF OVER 1,000 COMORIANS IN THE MALAGASY COASTAL CITY OF MAJUNGA IN DECEMBER 1976. HOWEVER, FOREIGN MINISTER TOLD ME THAT CR HAD AGREED TO A REQUEST BY SEVERAL OAU MEMBERS THAT IT NOT INSIST ON THE PUBLICATION OF THE FINDINGS OF AN OAU MISSION INVESTIGATING THE MAJUNGA MASSACRE. THE FINAL REPORT IS APPARENTLY SO

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R 191421Z AUG 77

FM AMEMBASSY ANTANANARIVO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9597

INFO AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM

AMEMBASSY MAPUTO

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 ANTANANARIVO 1504

DAMNING TO MADAGASCAR THAT THERE WAS FEELING IN LIBREVILLE THAT THE OAU, ALREADY BESET BY SERIOUS DIVISIONS, MIGHT NOT SURVIVE ITS PUBLICATION. CR INTENDED, HOWEVER, TO PURSUE CLAIMS FOR COMPENSATION FOR COMORIAN PROPERTY LOSSES IN MAJUNGA, ALBEIT WITH LITTLE HOPE OF ANY RESPONSE FROM DRM. PRESENT MALAGASY GOVERNMENT IS HELD IN CONTEMPT BY CR, NOT ONLY FOR ITS INACTION AT MAJUNGA BUT ALSO FOR NOT BEING TRULY REVOLUTIONARY. UNFAVORABLE COMPARISON ARE DRAWN WITH

TSIRANANA REGIME, WHICH RESPECTED ITS COMMITMENTS TOWARD COMORIAN COMMUNITY. IT IS EMBARRASSMENT OVER MAJUNGA AFFAIR THAT HAS HELD DOWN LEVEL OF MALAGASY PARTICIPATION AT RECENT AFRICAN MEETINGS, ACCORDING TO FOREIGN MINISTER.
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6. MORE SPECIFIC REQUEST FOR US ASSISTANCE IN THIS AREA WAS MADE BY YVES LE BRET, LONGTIME FRENCH BUSINESSMAN IN COMOROS AND NOW ROVING AMBASSADOR TO OCCIDENT. HE FORMALLY ASKED, ON BEHALF OF THE CR, THAT WE SUPPORT PLANNED REQUEST TO UN FOR FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE TO COMPENSATE COMORIAN GOVERNMENT FOR LARGE EXPENSES IT HAD UNDERGONE TO TAKE CARE OF 16,000 COMORIANS REPATRIATED TO ISLANDS FROM MAJUNGA AFTER DECEMBER MASSACRE.

7. WHILE LE BRET'S INTEREST IN THE COMOROS OBVIOUSLY STEMS FROM HIS BUSINESS HOLDINGS, THERE IS NO DOUBTING HIS CONCERN FOR THE WELFARE OF THE NEW STATE AND THE CONTINUATION INPOWER OF ALI SOILIH. HE IS HARD WORKING AND WELL INFORMED ON ALL ASPECTS OF COMORIAN POLITICS AND ECONOMY, AND APPARENTLY DRAFTS MOST OF THE DOCUMENTS USED BY THE CR IN ITS DEALINGS ABROAD, SHOWING AN ENCYCLOPEDIC KNOWLEDGE OF THE ORIGINS AND EVOLUTION OF THE RELATIONS BETWEEN THE CR, MADAGASCAR, AND FRANCE. HE IS ALSO TALK-ATIVE, AND INFORMED ME THAT THE USSR HAD OFFERED THE CR A LARGE AMOUNT OF ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE, "MORE THAT FRANCE EVER PROVIDED," IN EXCHANGE FOR THE USE OF GRANDE COMORE'S LONG AIRFIELD AT HAHAYA, NOW USED ONLY FOR THE OCCASIONAL 707 THAT COMES IN OR FOR PARTICULARLY HEAVILY-LOADED FLIGHTS, AND THE DEEP WATER ANCHORAGE IN ANJOUAN BAY. THIS HAD BEEN TURNED DOWN AND CR HAD HEARD NOTHING MORE OF AN ORIGINAL SOVIET OFFER TO PROVIDE DOCTORS FOR ISLANDS, OR OF ITS INTENTION TO ESTABLISH A RESIDENT MISSION IN CAPITAL OF MORONI. ACCORDING TO LE BRET, CR DOES NOT WANT ANY MORE RESIDENT MISSIONS (ONLY THE CHINESE ARE THERE NOW) AS THERE IS ENOUGH TO DO WITHOUT LOOKING AFTER A DIPLOMATIC COMMUNITY.

8. CR IS HARD PRESSED FINANCIALLY. IT HAS ENOUGH
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FOREIGN CURRENCY, MOSTLY IN GIFTS FROM ARAB AND EUROPEAN COUNTRIES, TO PURCHASE FOOD UNTIL THE END OF THE YEAR, AND HOPES TO RECEIVE MORE DONATIONS AFTER THAT IN FOOD OR CASH, BUT IS ONLY PAYING ITS MOST PRESSING BILLS, INSIDE THE COUNTRY AND OUT, AND HAS SEVERELY REDUCED THE SALARIES OF

CIVIL SERVANTS. ITS PLANS FOR DEVELOPMENT ARE JUST GETTING STARTED AND ARE APPROPRIATELY MODEST, CONCENTRATING ON AGRICULTURAL SECTOR AND FOOD SELF-SUFFICIENCY, AND INTENDING TO LEAVE MOST OTHER ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES TO MIXED PUBLIC-PRIVATE COMPANIES. IT IS NOT YET ABLE TO TAKE FULL ADVANTAGE OF THE OFFERS OF ASSISTANCE OFFERED BY OTHER COUNTRIES AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS.

9. THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT IS IN ONLY THE FIRST STATES OF THE REORGANIZATION BEGUN LAST APRIL WITH THE DISSOLUTION OF THE PREVIOUS ADMINISTRATION AND ITS BUREAUCRACY. THE CR IS PROUD THAT IT HAS BEEN THE ONLY AFRICAN COUNTRY WITH THE COURAGE TO ABOLISH THE COLONIAL ADMINISTRATION AND START FROM SCRATCH TO REBUILD ACCORDING TO THE NEEDS OF THE COUNTRY RATHER THAN VICE VERSA. BUT THIS HAS BEEN AT THE COST OF EXTREME DISLOCATION. A GREAT DEAL OF POWER HAS BEEN GIVEN TO THE YOUNG BUT THEY SEEM TO CONCENTRATE ON THEORY AND LEAVE PRAGMATIC DECISIONS TO THE ELDERS, SEEMINGLY A TACIT DEAL BETWEEN THEM. IN ADDITION TO THE RADICAL ALTERATION OF THE BUREAUCRACY, THERE HAVE BEEN FUNDAMENTAL CHANGES SINCE INDEPENDENCE IN THE STATUS OF WOMEN AND IN THE GENERAL RELATIONS BETWEEN VARIOUS CATEGORIES OF THE POPULATION, PARTICULARLY YOUNG AND OLD. ALTHOUGH THE APPEARANCE IS PEACEFUL, THERE MUST BE RESENTMENT AMONG THE OLDER PEOPLE AND DISCHARGED CIVIL SERVANTS NOT EVEN RECEIVING A PENSION. WHILE NOTHING IS SUPPOSED TO HAPPEN WITHOUT PRESIDENT ALI SOILIH'S APPROVAL , HE IS PRESIDING OVER A CONFUSED SCENE AND IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO JUDGE AT THIS TIME THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GENUINE ACCEPTANCE OF HIS RRIT.BARRETT

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Message Attributes

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